

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	12/05/2015
Unique reference number	SC036304
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
Registered person address	People Directorate, 9th Floor, Merton House, Stanley, BOOTLE, Merseyside, L20 3JA

Responsible individual	Marlyn Banham
Registered manager	Sally-Ann Edwards
Inspector	Nick Veysey

Inspection date	12/05/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC036304

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people have positive experiences and make very pleasing progress. They are doing very well with their education, their health and emotional well-being has improved, they are building good social skills and are dealing with their frustrations and problems constructively.
- The home is meeting its objective of preparing young people to live in a family. The home provides young people with stability and good daily routines. This enables them to be resilient, to understand their experiences and make progress. Young people have strong and trusting relationships with staff, feel loved and cared for, and better about themselves. They are treated with dignity and respect and are fully involved in all the decisions affecting their lives.
- Young people feel safe and are safer. Risks associated with going missing from care, sexual exploitation, bullying and self-harm have significantly reduced. Staff have a clear understanding of the risks to individual young people's safety and work effectively with the other services to protect them. Young people know that staff listen to their wishes, feelings and concerns.
- Strong and effective leadership and management ensure that the home is run in young people's best interests. Good monitoring systems provide managers with a clear picture of its strengths and areas for development. They are actively trying to improve the quality of care by making sure that staff have the relevant expertise and skills to meet the specific needs of each young person. The manager and staff work effectively with other services to promote young people's welfare and get the right support to meet all their needs.
- Young people are encouraged and supported to have positive relationships and behaviour. Staff's excellent communication and personal skills help young people understand about acceptable behaviour and respect, and to manage their feelings. Some young people struggle and show aggressive behaviour, including causing damage to the house and other young people's belongings. Some progress is being made in tackling these problems, but improvements are needed to make sure all young people feel comfortable.

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What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>6: The quality and purpose of care standard:</p> <p>In order to meet the quality and purpose care standard the registered person must ensure that staff -</p> <p>(2)(b) (vii) provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably;</p> <p>(c) ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to—</p> <p>(i) meet the needs of each child; and</p> <p>(ii) enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home.</p> <p>(Regulation 6 (2)(b)(vii) & (c)(i)(ii))</p>	21/06/2015
<p>11: The positive relationships standard:</p> <p>In order to help children to develop, and benefit from relationships based on mutual respect and trust, an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and others, the registered provider ensures that staff –</p> <p>(ii) help each child to develop socially aware behaviour;</p> <p>(iii) encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding;</p> <p>(iv) help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;</p> <p>(v) communicate to each child expectations about the child's</p>	21/06/2015

<p>behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding;</p> <p>(xi) de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children.</p> <p>(Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) & (2)(i)(iii)(iv)(v)(xi))</p>	
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the independent person they appoint has the necessary skills and understanding to: relate to children in the home's care; assess all the relevant information; and form an impartial judgement about the quality of the home's care. (The Guide, page 65, paragraph 15.8)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four children and young people who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The primary task of the home is to provide short- to medium-term care to prepare children and young people to live in a foster family.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/02/2015	CH - Interim	sustained effectiveness
14/07/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
03/03/2014	CH - Interim	Adequate

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
<p>Young people have positive experiences and make very good progress living in this children's home. They receive a consistently good standard of care that provides them with the right help to prepare them to live with a family. Some young people have successfully moved to live with foster carers and are doing exceptionally well. While others are now ready to live with foster carers and are waiting for a suitable family. Social workers and independent reviewing officers are positive about the staff's ability and commitment to meet the young people's needs. A social worker said, 'Staff provide the young person with appropriate and effective support. They are helping her explore questions about her life, working with therapist to help her understand why she can't live with her family, the reasons she had to move, and work to help support future placements, build her confidence and resilience.'</p> <p>Young people benefit from personalised care tailored to meet their individual needs and circumstances. They feel supported and enjoy trusting relationships with staff. They feel that staff are interested in their welfare, help them and want them to do well. Good daily routines and knowing what will happen throughout the day has helped young people feel safe and emotionally secure. Staff talked positively about a young person's progress over the last few weeks: 'He is a lot calmer, healthier, and fitter. He looks brighter; the dark rings around his eyes have gone. His level of concentration is better. (This is because) he has a healthy diet, a better sleeping pattern, a consistent routine and clear expectations and better hygiene. He is feeling better about himself and is getting plenty of physical exercise and fresh air.'</p> <p>Young people are treated with respect and dignity. They actively take part in the running of the home and the decisions affecting their lives, including choosing what they have to eat, how the house is decorated and what they do in their spare time. They feel that the staff always listen to them, take their complaints seriously and try hard to sort things out. This has included senior managers coming to see them to discuss their concerns about other young people's behaviour and to help them understand when it is not possible to act on their wishes. They are fully involved in planning for their care and support and are in agreement with the plans for their futures. They are involved in writing their placement plans and choosing their goals. Detailed plans that are consistently followed set out all of their</p>	

individual needs and the support to promote and safeguard their welfare. They are written from the young person's perspective and use language that they find easy to understand. The plans clearly show what they want to achieve, for example, 'I want to go out on a bike.' What they need to do and what support they need to help them. Staff regularly spend time with young people reviewing plans so that young people have an opportunity to talk about what is going well, to celebrate their achievements and to think about what they want to tackle next. It gives them a sense of achievement and builds confidence in their skills.

Staff work hard to gain a detailed knowledge of young people's individual needs so they get the right support and guidance. They actively chase up information, including care plans and assessments, from social workers and other services to enable them to build a better understanding of young people's lives and support needs. They effectively identify areas of unmet needs and take action to address these; for example, they followed up concerns about a young person's level of anxiety and secured support for him from the child and adolescent mental health service. Staff also work creatively in taking account of young people's ages and level of understanding, including using pictures as visual prompts to help a young person with brushing his teeth and personal care.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their health, helps them to understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and to make positive health choices. They enjoy good physical health and emotional well-being. They eat healthy and nutritious diets and get plenty of physical exercise, including swimming and keeping fit at the gym. They have very good access to a full range of health services, including the GP, dentist, and counselling. Staff have a very good understanding of young people's specific health and emotional needs. They provide excellent advice on health issues, including diet, exercise, sexual health, alcohol, drugs and relationships. They ensure young people's needs are met on a daily basis and get suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling poorly or have an accident.

Young people are making very good progress in education, with some doing exceptionally well and exceeding their expected targets. Their school attendance is excellent and they are well-motivated to learn and keen to do well. Some young people have struggled in school, but their participation in education is steadily increasing at a pace they can manage. A tutor said 'the young person is bright, knowledgeable, shows lots of skills verbally and working to show this on paper. This is building up her confidence around her knowledge and skills. She is focused and disciplined. She comes down and wants to learn, she is clear that she is there to work and does.' The young person is thrilled by what she is achieving and

proudly shows off her work to staff.

Staff actively promote young people's education and are successful in developing young people's opportunities to learn and achieve. They ensure young people have good access to plenty of books, art materials, games and computers. They have a very good understanding about young people's education targets, progress and where they need additional help. For example, helping a young person to learn to improve his fine motor skills by drawing in a straight line, to tell the time and use numbers in real life situations, such as using money. They fully support young people with their homework and through end of key stage tests. Staff have established strong links with schools and education providers. They work effectively with teachers and the placing authority when young people are experiencing difficulties. They are successfully supporting a young person's return to school. The young person, as a result, is doing much better. Her teachers reported, 'she is like a different girl since she came back – helpful eager to learn', 'I am pleased with her attitude and progress', 'she fully capable of getting C at GCSE' and 'the return to school is a chance for a fresh start and she is displaying a positive attitude.'

Young people play an active part in the local area and enjoy the same experiences as other young people. They have made friends locally, go to youth clubs, and take a neighbour's dog out for a walk. They have every opportunity to pursue their interests and try new things, including designing clothes and taking part in a fashion show, borrowing books from the library, going to the circus and fair, the zip-wire in the park, and going on adventure holidays.

Young people maintain good relationships with their parents and families through seeing them regularly. Staff work constructively with young people, families, social workers and support services to make sure that contact is a safe and rewarding experience that promotes and builds young people's relationships with important people in their lives.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Strong safe care practices ensure that young people live in a safe place. They feel safe and protected. Their positive and trusting relationships with staff mean that	

they share their worries and concerns with the staff and other trusted adults, including the school nurse. They know that staff are there to help them and will make sure they are safe. The manager and staff have a clear understanding of the signs and symptoms of abuse and exploitation and the risks young people face. They are building young people's understanding of risk to enable them to make positive choices about their personal safety. This work has led to a young person alerting staff about a potentially harmful situation involving social media. Staff always take decisive action when they have safeguarding concerns and work well with social workers, the police and Local Authority Designated Officer to protect young people from harm.

Risks to young people's safety are carefully analysed and managed very well. The manager and staff have a clear understanding of actual and potential risks to individual young people's safety. Up to date and detailed written risk assessments give a detailed picture of the specific measures staff need to take, including direct work about dealing with feelings, personal safety and the risks of sexual exploitation. Staff have a very clear understanding of young people's particular vulnerabilities relating to their level of understanding and emotional maturity. This enables them to ensure young people are safe at home and in the community. Staff are good at balancing the need for protection with enabling young people to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development; for example enabling young people to spend time in the community with friends.

Since moving into the home young people are considerably safer with a significant reduction in the risks associated with aggression, missing from care, child sexual exploitation and self-harm. The staff work very well with the police and placing authority when young people go missing or do not come in on time. They go out to look for them, try to contact them by mobile phone, check with their family and friends, and the places they usually go. A young person said, 'Sometimes when I've been out with my friends I come in late. The staff phone me and come to look for me. They just want to know I'm safe.' Young people are usually found quickly and have received the reassurance and support they needed to be welcomed home safely, including a return home interview conducted by an independent person. This gives the young person a chance to talk privately about the reasons from them being away from home. This has helped staff to understand young people's reasons and provide appropriate support to encourage them to not go missing.

Staff encourage and support young people to understand about acceptable behaviour and to learn how to manage their feelings and frustrations constructively. Young people are kind and thoughtful towards each other, for example lending a soft toy to another young person to help them get to sleep.

They also have disagreements with each other and staff. The use of restorative practice has helped young people to resolve their difficulties and learn skills to manage conflict in ways that does not lead to aggression. Some young people now manage their disagreements with emotional maturity and resilience. They fall out, talk through the problem, accept their part in the dispute and their differences, and are soon friends again. As a result bullying is no longer the problem. However, another young person, due to his age and level of understanding, struggles to manage his feelings and shows aggressive behaviour, including damage to the house and other young people's belongings. This behaviour has presented challenges for other young people and staff. The staff have a good understanding of the reasons for his behaviour and are using effective strategies to help them manage their level of anxiety and anger, including using distractions, different activities and chance to talk about what is upsetting him. He said, 'staff talk to me to try to help me to be good.' The staff are working with all the young people to try to improve their relationships and to manage their frustrations. The reward of a trip to Blackpool based on every one showing each other respect is having a positive effect of helping young people think about their actions towards each other and has led to some improvements. Staff use reflective practice to review young people's behaviour and identify what is working to help calm situations down; for example taking them to the park or giving them space in a quiet part of the house to talk about the problem.

Staff are knowledgeable and competent at developing positive relationships and managing conflict. Their consistent behavioural management approach is making a positive difference and aggressive behaviour has reduced over recent weeks. For example, young people are more settled and less anxious, and staff are getting to understand their needs and behaviour, which is helping them to intervene effectively. They are managing aggressive behaviour through effective communication and positive interactions with the young people involved without the need to use restraint. However, the situation remains stressful for young people. Other young people's behaviour has become difficult at times and they are unhappy about the damage to the house. One said, 'It doesn't feel like home anymore.' Work is still needed to sustain the recent improvements to build stronger relationships and further reduce incidents of aggression.

The quality of the accommodation has deteriorated since the last inspection because of the damage caused to the house by young people. They are not currently living in a comfortable and relaxing home. The broken television and furniture in the lounge has not been replaced. Young people are able to watch television in their bedrooms and in a smaller lounge but this restricts the space available for them to use to relax and spend time with each other. Their bedrooms

and bathrooms are personalised, clean, tidy and decorated and furnished to a good standard.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
<p>An interim manager is running the home in the temporary absence of the Registered Manager from 28 April 2015 to the end of June 2015. The interim management arrangements are providing continuity of management and leadership without any disruption to young people's lives. The interim manager already works in a senior position at the home and knows the young people and staff very well. She is very experienced and suitably qualified, and is providing strong leadership and effective day-to-day management of the home.</p> <p>The home is run in line with its statement of purpose and has a strong culture of providing a supportive and nurturing environment for vulnerable young people. It is making a positive difference to their lives, helping them make progress in health and education, build resilience, confidence in their skills and improving the chances of them living successfully in a family. Accurate written records provide a detailed picture of young people's progress and experiences. that contributes to an understanding of young people's lives and informs the plans for their care. The managers and staff share this information in regular meetings with the family placement team to help them find suitable families that match young people's needs and circumstances. Strong relationships with doctors, schools, therapists, and social workers ensure that young people get the support and services they require. The interim manager assertively and collaboratively works with the other services to promote young people's best interests.</p> <p>Young people are looked after by very experienced, skilled, appropriately qualified, and compassionate staff. They work well together and follow a clear and consistent approach that provides young people with a suitable structure and routine. They feel very well supported professionally and emotionally by the interim manager. The interim manager and staff have professional supervision at regular intervals to provide them routine opportunities to discuss their performance, development and any concerns with a senior person. Team meetings routinely provide staff with the chance as a group to review and reflect on young people's progress, the running of the home and how best to develop and improve the standard of care and support.</p>	

This has given them the chance to discuss the impact of young people's behaviour on each other and devise effective strategies aimed at improving behaviour and relationships, such as the reward of a trip to Blackpool for showing more respect to each other and staff.

The interim manager uses thorough internal monitoring to develop a clear and realistic understanding of the home's strengths, the current challenges and she is working hard to make improvements. For example, she clearly set out the improvements required in promoting young people's relationships and behaviour and the quality of the accommodation. She and staff are already planning to replace the television securely and had started to involve the young people in choosing how to decorate the house. She is effectively deploying staff to promote and safeguard young people's welfare by increasing staff number from within the existing team at weekends and evenings to ensure young people can access a range of activities and get the support they need. Also she has matched staff's specific expertise and skills to meet the needs of individual young people; for example using staff's skills in using visual aids to promote personal care with young people with more complex needs. She is building staff's practice and expertise relevant to young people's needs through training in mental health awareness and attention disorders and guidance from other services with specialist knowledge in more complex needs.

The local authority has addressed the weaknesses in the external monitoring identified at the last inspection. Independent monitoring visits are now taking place every month. The monitoring is providing more scrutiny, includes the views of children, social workers and independent reviewing officers, and appropriate oversight of the running of the home and young people's welfare. The local authority is going to use new independent people to carry out the monitoring alongside elected members. It is important that these people have the necessary skills and understanding to relate to young people, provide a high level of scrutiny and form an impartial judgement about the quality of the home's care.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

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